

THE STATUS OF *STRANGALIA ATTENUATA* (L.) (COL.: CERAMBYCIDAE) IN BRITAIN

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“*STRANGALIA ATTENUATA*, L., is decidedly doubtfully indigenous. I can learn nothing trustworthy about it, and why it is kept in the *Catalogue*, instead of being placed amongst the doubtful species, I cannot understand. The specimens in the Power collection are not *S. attenuata* at all, but only aberrations of the preceding species”. [*Strangalia armata* (= *maculata* Poda)].

That was the opinion expressed nearly a hundred years ago by the young and rising Coleopterist, Horace Donisthorpe (Donisthorpe, 1898). There is a hint of exasperation, almost peevishness, in such forthright remarks. The catalogue referred to was no doubt the latest published in 1893 by Dr David Sharp and Canon W.W. Fowler (Sharp, 1893).

And yet . . . over forty years later the mature Donisthorpe, now an eminent and leading entomologist of the day, included the species without further remonstrance in his published list of Windsor Forest beetles (Donisthorpe, 1939). But this is to anticipate.

Thomas Marsham, at the beginning of the last century, appears to be the first English entomologist to accept *Strangalia attenuata* as a native species. His description, freely translated from the Latin, reads, *attenuata*. *Lep. [tura]* with tawny-yellow gradually tapering elytra; with four black fasciae, yellow legs. Neither length nor habitat is given. He continues: *Hind body strongly tapered. Head, pronotum, thorax black. Abdomen rust-coloured, apex black. Elytra with four yellow fasciae with the same number black. Apex of hind femora black.* Marsham adds: *Perhaps a male form of the preceding?* This was a reference to *Strangalia quadrifasciata* (L.) (Marsham, 1802).

Dr Turton (1806), describes *S. attenuata* as under, but his work, based upon Linnaeus and subsequent authors, merely indicates that the species is Continental: *Shells [elytra] tapering, yellow with four black bands: legs testaceous. Abdomen rufous tipped with black, sometimes wholly black* (Turton, 1806).

In 1819 the beetle's name appears in a list of Cerambycids detailed by Samouelle in his *Compendium's* calendar, with the added information that it occurs in July, and a reference to Marsham's work (Samouelle, 1819).

The species, listed as *Leptura attenuata*, is included in Curtis' *Guide*, but marked that his cabinet specimen is not of British origin (Curtis, 1837).

Turning next to Stephen's *Systematic Catalogue*, published in the same year (1829) as the above, the insect, similarly named, is quoted as no. 2071 in the Stephensian collection (Stephens, 1829).

S. attenuata is described in considerably more detail by Stephens in his *Mandibulata*, and for the first time it is learned that the beetle is "Very rare: several specimens have been captured at different periods near Salisbury . . ." Is it conceivable that the two examples in the Dale collection come from this source? Dale père and Stephens were on friendly terms (Stephens, 1831).

In his Manual, published in 1839, Stephens describes *attenuata* in much the same way, adding to the Salisbury locality, Southend, and that it occurs on flowers during June, size approximately 14mm (Stephens, 1839).

Not surprisingly, *S. attenuata*, because of its great rarity, is not named in either Spry and Shuckard's (1840) *The British Coleoptera delineated*, (or in the second edition of 1861) or in Janson (1863).

In about 1845 a specimen of *S. attenuata* was found in Windsor Forest, Berkshire by T. Desvignes, a competent Coleopterist not likely to have mis-identified the species, albeit being better known, perhaps, as a Hymenopterist. After his death, his collections were sold at the S. Stevens sale in 1868, at which E.W. Janson is believed to have purchased this beetle, according to his son, Oliver Janson, and later bought from Jansons (who were entomological dealers in Great Russell Street, London, W.C.) by George R. Crotch. His collection of Coleoptera is now in the keeping of the University Museum, Cambridge. It is listed in Crotch's 1863 Catalogue. That suggests that the latter knew of *attenuata*'s existence, but that he had to wait for some years before its acquisition.

It is relevant to observe that much later, in 1938, Donisthorpe compiled the Coleoptera list in the Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely. This undertaking would surely have entailed a detailed examination of the collections and materials held by the Department of Zoology in the University Museum: that being so, the Crotch collection would not have escaped Donsithorpe's inspection. If he saw Desvignes' *attenuata* specimen, this would serve to confirm his seeming *volte face* in the preparation of his Windsor Forest list.

But did he? For, this particular beetle is neither in the Crotch nor in any of the other collections in the Cambridge University Museum!

Significantly, too, the beetle is not named in the Coleoptera section of the Victoria County History of Berkshire (Holland, 1906).

In this connection it is not inappropriate to interpolate that of the fifteen catalogues of British Coleoptera published between the years 1829-1977, only three exclude *S. attenuata*, of which Donisthorpe's was one in 1904, when he evidently convinced his co-author, T. (later Sir Thomas) Hudson Beare, that the species be omitted, an exclusion which the latter repeated in his own catalogue (Beare, 1904 and 1930). Waterhouse marked the species as non-indigenous in his Pocket Catalogue of 1861, but not in his earlier enlarged edition (Waterhouse, 1858 and 1861). The two Exchange Lists both include *attenuata*.

Cox, in his two-volume Handbook of 1874, describes *attenuata* in terms not dissimilar from Marsham's and Stephens', emphasising once again its

black and reddish-yellow elytral banding and a similar coloration of part of the abdominal segments: size 10.5-12.5mm. He adds, “*Rare*”. (!) (Cox, 1874).

Referring now to Fowler's monumental work on the British Coleoptera, there is a very detailed description of *S. attenuata*. He quotes Stephens' two place-names and its presence on flowers, but comments: “. . . *very rare and somewhat doubtfully indigenous* . . .; *there are one or two other specimens in collections without locality.*”

Of Fowler's second observation there is no question, so Donisthorpe's strictures seem to have had some influence for Desvignes' find is not featured, nor does it appear in Fowler's sixth (supplementary) volume (containing additional localities), with whom Donisthorpe collaborated in 1913 (Fowler, 1890 and 1913).

Omitted from their 1945 Check List, Kloet and Hincks reinstate the species in the second edition (1977 – the latest to be published in this country), marked as extinct, influenced possibly by Mr Allen's suggestions in 1957 and again in 1968 in the *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* (Allen, 1957 and 1968).

Other than the missing Desvignes beetle there are only four known specimens of *S. attenuata* of British provenance. These have been examined and re-examined on a number of occasions and as recently as the autumn of 1994: they are undubitably *attenuata*.

Two are in the Dale collection kept in the Hope Department, University Museum, Oxford. One is a male, simply labelled “Little”; the other, a female, is marked “Burney, 1846”. There is no indication as to whether or not these beetles were found in Wiltshire or Essex. Both examples are small (under 15mm) and badly damaged: their abdominal segments are coloured reddish-yellow. In one specimen the hind tarsi are completely missing; in the other, the hind tarsi are incomplete, but what remain of the latter are still longer than the hind tibiae – an important superficial determinant. Each has the typical long, protruding pygidium.

The remaining two specimens are in the national collections at the Natural History Museum, London. They are simply labelled “ex Power coll.”. One measures 13mm and the other 14.2mm, with an all black abdomen and a deep reddish-brown to black abdomen respectively. The coloration of the femora, tibiae and tarsi conform with Fowler's description. The pygidia are protrusive.

Since the British Museum examples come from the Power collection, they must have been the two upon which Donisthorpe published his initial views *supra*.

What is it that makes *S. attenuata* so strikingly different from, say, *S. maculata*, or indeed, *S. quadrifasciata*? It is its small and very slender, tapering body – this may vary from as little as 9mm to (exceptionally)

17mm, its yellow legs, with notably the posterior femora and tibiae tipped with black, the hind tarsi, nearly always, but not invariably, considerably longer than the hind tibiae and that protruding, quite differently-shaped pygidium (Kuhnt, 1913, fig. 90a). There are other distinctions, such as the shallow pitted markings along the 5th or 6th – 11th antennal joints, unidentifiable “in the field”.

A slender female micromorphous example of *S. maculata* var. *sinuata* F., which is heavily banded black and yellow (Villiers, fig. 833), might fulfil a number of these characteristics: not so *S. quadrifasciata*.

In late July, 1982, a beetle of narrow appearance with elytral banding similar to that of *S. quadrifasciata*, but with yellow legs, was found amongst grass in Holmbush Forest, Sussex. Two years later, it was identified from a coloured illustration in Harde (1984) as *Strangalia attenuata* (Moon, 1991).

After an absence from this country of 150 years, this – the determination being confirmed – would be a remarkable find. Sadly, the specimen was released and not collected.

Sapiens nihil affirmat quod non probet?

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Note: Illustrations of *attenuata* are difficult to locate. References below marked * figure this beetle. Other references not cited in the text contain narrative comment. Some of the lists and catalogues cited are notable in their exclusion of *attenuata*.

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Olethreutes mygindiana (D.&S.) (Lep.: Tortricidae)

– new to Shropshire (V.C.40)

The status of the lepidoptera of Shropshire has been reviewed by Riley (*A Natural History of the Butterflies and Moths of Shropshire*, Swan Hill Press 1991). Although he deals in the main with macrolepidoptera, he includes an inventory of the microlepidoptera of which the more recent records tend to originate from Whixall Moss. Riley has updated his 1991 publication with significant additions and a corrigenda to the Shropshire list (Riley *et al* – *Entomologist's Gaz.* **45**: 167-182, 1994). Having been prompted by Riley's book to restart recording macrolepidoptera in the south-west corner of the county, I decided in the spring of 1994 to widen my interest to include micros. I am pleased to report that the fifth micromoth that I took in Shropshire was what I believe to be a first record for the county of *Olethreutes mygindiana* (D.&S.).